



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Tourism Marketing and Branding Investment Plan

The following specifications are offered by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation (Commerce RI).

To be considered, please submit **three (3) copies** of your written bid proposal on or before July 30, 12:00 p.m. local time to:

*Rhode Island Commerce Corporation
315 Iron Horse Way, Suite 101
Providence, RI 0290
ATTN: Tourism Marketing and Branding Investment Plan*

Proposals (3 copies) must be sealed and packages clearly identified with the following: **Tourism Marketing and Branding Investment Plan**. Proposals received after specified time and date cannot be considered.

Background

Commerce RI's mission is to work with public, private and non-profit partners to create the conditions for businesses in all sectors to thrive and to improve the quality of life for our citizens by promoting the State's long-term economic health and prosperity.

Rhode Island's tourism industry is a major component of the State's economy. As part of our mission, Commerce RI coordinates Rhode Island's statewide tourism promotion efforts.

Unfortunately, national economic trends and increasingly aggressive regional competitors have successfully pulled tourism market share from Rhode Island. The national average state allocation for tourism promotion is approximately \$10 million directed to state tourism budgets. Rhode Island's state tourism marketing investment is currently hovering at about \$500,000 annually, including personnel costs. Influenced by expanded marketing efforts by other states, Rhode Island experienced a 12 percent decline in market share from 2007 to 2012. Tourism spending remains 5% below the 2007 pre-recession peak.

Rhode Island risks losing an indispensable economic and job growth opportunity by not effectively investing tourism dollars.

Project Overview

Commerce RI, through this RFP, is seeking to engage a tourism industry expert to develop a three-year statewide **Tourism Marketing and Branding Investment Plan**. This plan will serve as a **data-driven road map for state decision makers** illustrating the correlation between investment in tourism marketing and branding efforts and expected corresponding ROI (economic and state revenue impact, job and industry growth etc...) per dollars invested.

Scope of Services

Through this process, the consultant will:

- 1) Outline the economic development rationale for increased investments in proactive destination promotion initiatives.
- 2) Analyze current levels of investment in the U.S. market and recommend a Commerce RI funding and implementation strategy to enable Rhode Island to compete with comparable markets. The findings will incorporate relevant research, data and conclusions summarized in a report.
- 3) Using comparative data, the consultant will provide a projected ROI for the state for every dollar of investment in tourism marketing and branding. ROI projections must include investment impact on sales, tax revenue and job growth based on current IHS Global Insight TSA and State Department of Taxation data.
- 4) The findings will be primarily conveyed through appealing and easily understandable visuals as well as supporting narrative and references containing further detail.
- 5) Using examples of states comparable in scale to the Rhode Island market and also those in direct competition for tourism market share (regardless of size or scale), the consultant will provide a comparison of investment efforts and their ROI.
- 6) The consultant will develop a proactive state response (investment levels and proposed tactics) to be implemented by Commerce RI to grow the state's share of the tourism market. The investment plan will be based on best practices in comparative markets and be broken down by market segment (group tour, international, travel trade etc...)
- 7) The plan will offer recommendations for state funding and integrated tactical implementation over a three-year period beginning July 1, 2015.
- 8) The consultant will also outline the projected scenario where inaction is selected as a response and Rhode Island simply maintains current funding levels; where data has shown that level funding has resulted in continued lost market share.
- 9) The consultant will develop a performance evaluation matrix for annual reporting to the state legislature on the investment plan's effectiveness.

Selection Criterion

Commerce RI seeks proposals from firms or entities that:

1. Have demonstrable tourism strategic planning experience
2. Have demonstrable tourism industry investment plan development and expertise
3. Have demonstrable tourism-related organizational development expertise
3. Have demonstrable destination branding experience and expertise
4. Have demonstrable understanding of the Rhode Island tourism product and industry infrastructure

Proposal Requirements

All proposals must follow the following proposal format and include all required information:

- Business identification
- Contact information (of individual(s) who will be involved in this process)
- Qualification statement of bidder (including description of similar projects).
- Technical approach/proposed process
- Appropriate or related sample of work on a similar project
- A bid covering all costs and compensation. The bid should provide a breakdown of costs for professional services, materials, postage and any other costs
- Designation of all confidential and proprietary information
- References (minimum of three including contact information)
- Any additional information which could aid in your proposal evaluation
- Bios of staff proposed to work on the project

Rejection of Proposals

Commerce RI reserves the right to reject any or all proposals in whole or in part for any reason without incurring any cost or liability whatsoever. All proposals will be reviewed for completeness of the submission requirements. If a proposal fails to meet a material requirement of the RFP, if the submission is incomplete or the proposal contains irregularities, the proposal may be rejected. All proposals may be rejected in any case where it is determined that the proposals are not competitive, or where the cost is not reasonable.

Evaluation Process and Highest Scored Proposal

An evaluation team will review in detail all proposals that are received to determine the highest scored proposal (HSP).

During the evaluation process, Commerce RI may require a perspective vendor to answer questions with regard to the proposal and/or require certain prospective vendor to make a formal presentation to the evaluation team.

The following criteria will be used in reviewing and comparing the proposals and in determining the HSP. The weight to be assigned to each criterion appears following each item:

- Understands the scope of the project through concise description of methods, procedures and personnel vendor intends to employ for management and operation of the project, (25%);
- The ability, capacity, flexibility, financial stability and skill of the perspective vendor to perform the contract, (25%);
- The character, integrity, reputation, judgment, experience and efficiency of the perspective vendor, including the quality of the perspective vendor's performance on previous contracts with the Commerce RI, if any (25%);
- Cost and compensation required. Costs consideration will be reviewed only if a proposal is determined to be otherwise responsive. All figures entered on the proposal must be clearly legible. (25%)

Award and Execution of Contract

Subject to the Commerce RI's right to reject any or all proposals, the HSP will be awarded the Tourism Marketing and Branding Investment Plan contract.

Questions and Answers

Questions must be emailed to Mark Brodeur, Director of Tourism, by July 21, 2014 to:
mbrodeur@commerceri.com

Answers will be posted on www.commerceri.com by July 23, 2014.

Schedule of RFP Process and Project Timeline

Advertisement of RFP:	July 16, 2014
Questions deadline:	July 21, 2014
Answers Posted:	July 23, 2014
Proposals due:	by Noon on July 30, 2014 (3 copies)